

## Press release



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## Swiss sonic bliss: Absolute Sounds to distribute Nagra

Oscar wins, space missions, JFK and the CIA – Nagra is a high-end audio manufacturer with a unique heritage and a range of Swiss-built precision instruments that make glorious sound

*London, England* -- Absolute Sounds, the UK's leading high-end hi-fi distribution company since 1978, is pleased to announce its appointment as sole distributor of Nagra audio equipment for the UK and Ireland with immediate effect.

Nagra was formed in Switzerland in 1951 by Stefan Kudelski, a gifted young engineer who set up a workshop at his family's home in Prilly, near Lake Geneva. From the start, his creations were groundbreaking – his first product, the reel-to-reel Nagra I, was the world's first professional-quality portable sound recorder. It was a class apart from contemporary alternatives due to its compact size, reliability and sound quality, and a revelation for radio broadcasting, cinema and music recording. The name 'Nagra' is derived from a Polish verb meaning "to record" – a nod to Kudelski's Polish roots.

Over the ensuing decades, Nagra remained firmly established as the gold standard in portable audio recorders, its continuous innovation and meticulous engineering maintaining a peerless reputation among professionals for both mobile and studio-based sound recording. Though its roots were firmly

founded in the analogue age, the company straddled the advent of digital audio with ease and earned multiple Oscar and Emmy wins for its technical achievements along the way.

### Classic albums, Oscar-winning movies, Cold War spies and trips to the Moon

Nagra's portable sound recorders – notably the iconic Nagra IV-S – have been used in the recording of some of the most famous albums of all time, including The Beatles' *Let It Be*, Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*, David Bowie's *Heroes* and Michael Jackson's *Thriller*.



*Left* Launched in 1971, the Nagra IV-S portable reel-to-reel machine was used in the recording and production of many albums and movies

In the world of cinema, numerous films that won Oscars for sound used Nagra recorders in their production, from *The Exorcist* to *The English Patient*. In fact, as Academy Award winning sound engineer Chris Newman put it: "There was virtually no film made from 1961 until the 1990s that did not use Nagra." The company's distinctive devices have been a common sight *in* movies too, as well as being used to make them, from Beatles film *Help!* (1965) to *Gorillas in the Mist* (1988) and *The Informant!* (2009).

Another string to Nagra's bow over the decades has been the development of technologies and devices for high-security applications, including covert surveillance. This began in the early 1960s with the SN (Série Noire) miniature reel-to-reel tape recorders, originally developed for the CIA reportedly at the request of President John F. Kennedy. These devices were used extensively during the Cold War era, capitalising on Nagra's ability to make small portable audio recorders of unique quality and reliability. These characteristics proved invaluable for other adventurous applications, including expeditions to the summit of Everest, the deepest depths of the ocean and even into space with NASA's Apollo missions.



*Left* Originally a top-secret CIA commission, Nagra's SN is the archetypal sound recording device for Cold War surveillance

### Nagra's next mission: launching high-end hi-fi to new heights

It was not until 1997 that Nagra chose to expand its expertise into the domestic setting. The PL-P preamplifier launched at £5,700 (more than £11,000 in today's money); it was unlike anything the high-

end hi-fi establishment was producing, borrowing heavily from the technology and aesthetics of the company's esteemed recorders – including an ingenious battery power system.

In 2012, a separate company called Audio Technology Switzerland was spun out of the Kudelski Group, which owned the Nagra brand. Operating independently but with the Kudelski family still the main shareholders, the new company looked to steer Nagra's consumer and professional audio products to even greater heights, while the Kudelski Group focused on other products and services in different industries. To this day, Audio Technology Switzerland remains the custodian of the Nagra audio brand.

Nagra has produced a steady stream of extraordinary high-end hi-fi, encompassing valve and solid-state amps, DACs, turntables and more, whilst also maintaining its unique reputation in the world of professional sound recording. The company and its equipment continue to be inextricably linked with the Montreux Jazz Festival, a partnership that began with the first festival in 1967; other customers include the BBC, NBC, Universal, MGM, Columbia, Paramount, 20th Century Fox, Columbia Pictures and NASA. Contracts with law enforcement and government agencies are also ongoing – and top secret!

### **Built like a Nagra**

Nagra sources the finest circuit components from around the world, many custom-made to its own unique specification. Its products are designed, assembled and tested to the very highest standard at its facility in Romanel-sur-Lausanne, just a few kilometres from Prilly where Nagra was founded, with key procedures such as the winding of the company's unique audio transformers performed entirely in house. Switzerland is synonymous with quality and precision, and Nagra's contribution to this reputation since 1951 has been considerable – the company has always been a pioneer in design and manufacturing and among other innovations was the first Swiss firm to use CNC machining.

As Alan Sircom, Editor of Hi-Fi+ magazine, put it: "The 'built like a Swiss watch' cliché is impossible to resist, although it makes me think that perhaps watchmakers should be saying 'built like a Nagra'."



*Left Nagra has long been famed for the engineering and build quality of its products, on a par with the finest Swiss watches*

In 2025, Nagra's high-end audio range comprises four product lines – in ascending order, these are the Compact Line, Classic Line, HD Line and Reference Line. There are valve and solid-state circuit designs, analogue and digital source components, amplifiers of different types and sizes... just about the only thing Nagra doesn't make is speakers! The unmistakable design language established decades ago permeates throughout – impeccably machined rotary switches, meters in circular housings, build quality bettered by none. Producing a Nagra device is as much an art as it is a science; as Nagra says, "unique craftsmanship leads to unique performance".

## The next chapter: Nagra x Absolute Sounds

Matthieu Latour, sales and marketing director at Audio Technology Switzerland, explained why he is excited to partner with Absolute Sounds to distribute Nagra's hi-fi products in the UK and Ireland:

"Absolute Sounds is among the most prestigious high-end audio distributors in the world, with an expert team led by Ricardo Franassovici – a man whose experience and influence in the field is unrivalled. The company has long-standing relationships with some of the finest audio brands on the planet, many of which have excellent synergy with Nagra components – for example, Wilson Audio, Magico and DeVore Fidelity loudspeakers, and Transparent cables.

"Through Absolute Sounds' unrivalled network, we can access the finest specialist retailers in the UK and Ireland to ensure Nagra customers receive the exceptional service they deserve. We look forward to writing the next chapter of the Nagra story together!"

Commenting on his company's partnership with Nagra, Ricardo Franassovici, Absolute Sounds' founder and managing director, said:

"As the UK's foremost high-end audio distributor, we're regularly approached by brands from around the world who seek our expertise. We're fortunate to already work with many of the sector's most revered and influential manufactures; few others measure up to the standard required to add something unique to our portfolio.

"Nagra, however, is truly special – the original Swiss innovator in high-performance audio electronics whose products I've admired since my days in the rock music industry in the 1970s. I've waited patiently for the opportunity to work with the company and, when it came, I instantly embraced it.

"The late, great Dave Wilson, the doyen of high-end loudspeakers, once said: 'There is no other brand of electronics that is as unique as Nagra in its history, and in the thorough professional design, concept and execution [of its products].' The company has a wonderful brand story, and products that stand apart from others in their design and performance. Unquestionably, Nagra is among the finest high-end audio manufacturers in the world, and we are delighted to be working with the company to the benefit of discerning music lovers here in the UK."

Visit [nagraaudio.com](https://nagraaudio.com) for information about Nagra's 2025 product range.



*Left Design, concept and execution – Nagra delivers zero-compromise product engineering of the highest calibre, exemplified by the Reference PREAMP*



Absolute Sounds is the UK's leading importer and distributor of high-end audio equipment. The company was formed in 1978 by Ricardo Franassovici, who left a successful career in the music industry to become one of the world's leading hi-fi entrepreneurs. Ricardo's burning desire has always been to give UK-based music lovers the opportunity to experience audio at the highest level, cherry-picking the very best components from around the globe to create a 'hi-fi boutique' overflowing with highly covetable, high-performance products. Like the finest watches and most prestigious motorcars, these brands deliver finely tuned, supremely engineered products that simply ooze desirability. If you are seeking the world's best audio equipment, Absolute Sounds is your first port of call.

[absolutesounds.com](http://absolutesounds.com)

BRANDS DISTRIBUTED BY ABSOLUTE SOUNDS – MAIN PORTFOLIO AND TEN COLLECTION			
Analog Relax	darTZeel	Jadis	Robert Koda
Antipodes Audio	dCS	Krell	TechDAS
Artesania Audio	DeVore Fidelity	Magico	Thiele
Audio Research	Döhmman Audio	Metaxas & Sins	Trafomatic Audio
Constellation Audio	Franco Serblin	Nagra	Transparent Audio
Copland	HSE Swiss	PrimaLuna	Wilson Audio
Dan D'Agostino	Ikigai Audio	Reed	



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